



# Westhoughton Community Network

Meeting: 7:00pm Tuesday, 9th August 2011 at Brookfield Hall

## Minutes

### 1. Present

#### Groups in attendance (16)

1. Daisy Hill In Bloom (DHiB)
2. Friends of Eatock Lodge (FoEL)
3. Hindley's and Clough Farm Residents Association (HACFRA)
4. Hope Church (HC)
5. Howfenfest (HF)
6. WASP (Westhoughton Age Support Group) (WASP)
7. Westhoughton Art Group (WAG)
8. Westhoughton Carnival Queens Association (WCQA)
9. Westhoughton High School (WHS)
10. Westhoughton Lions Rugby League Club (WLRLC)
11. Westhoughton Local History Group (WLRLC)
12. Westhoughton Methodist Church (WMC)
13. Westhoughton Rotary Club (WRC)
14. Westhoughton United Reformed Church (WURC)
15. Westhoughton Visiting Service (WVS)
16. Wingates Brass Band (WBB)
- ~ Bolton At Home [Admin] (BaH)

#### Individuals in attendance (29)

Lisa Bradley (BaH)	Dave Hendry (WAG)	Ted Wisedale (WLHG)
Anne Burns (BaH)	J Watkinson (WCQA)	John Howard-Norman (WMC)
Lynda Winrow-Baker (DHiB)	Sandra Greenall (WCQA)	Jim Gilfillan (WRC)
Ann Benn (FoEL)	Ann Butler (WHS)	Harold Daniels (WRC) [Chair]
Trevor Benn (FoEL)	Neil Hart (WLRLC)	Peter Schofield (WURC)
Brenda Shott (FoEL)	John Thompson (WLRLC)	Joan Adams (WVS)
Doug Cunliffe (HACFRA)	Pam Clarke (WLHG)	Jean Jones (WVS)
Mark Taylor (HC)	Yvonne Woolley (WLHG)	Elaine Wisedale (WVS)
Chris Buckley (HF)	Jeffrey Haworth (WLHG)	David Kaye (WBB)
Jean Green (WASP)	Barbara Haworth (WLHG)	

#### Apologies (6)

SWAN (Save Westhoughton Act Now) – Andrew Glithero  
WACO (Westhoughton Active Communities Organisation) – Janet Colley  
Westhoughton Methodist AODS (WMAODS) – Bill Greenhalgh  
Westhoughton Town Football Club (WTFC) – Andrew Buckley  
Wingates' Residents Association (WRA) – Lawrence Owens  
Women's Royal Voluntary Service (WRVS) – Pat Allen



## 2. Background and Introductions

Harold Daniels and Chris Buckley gave the background to the organising of this meeting. Previously Bolton CVS had supported the running of a 'Washacre Community Network' but funding and support for this has since ceased. A number of groups involved in this network saw the benefits of its continuation as a Westhoughton-wide network with a remit of:

- **Information sharing**
- **Collaboration and co-operation**
- **A group by and for Westhoughton-based community groups**
- **Mutual support and advice**
- **Building relationships**

## 3. Discussion of what groups would like from the Westhoughton Community Network

Acting Chair, Harold Daniels thanked Lisa Bradley, Jean Jones and Chris Buckley for their help in the lead up to and in organising this meeting.

After round table introductions by individuals, Chris Buckley asked those in attendance if they felt such a network would be beneficial and for their views on the following:

- **Nature of group**
- **Objectives**
- **Nature, frequency, content and location of future meetings**
- **Links and relationship with other groups / bodies**

Anne Burns, Bolton At Home Neighbourhood Manager, said that she believed there was support for an informal group which could share ideas and best practice and come together in collaboration.

Harold Daniels said that one idea from the original network had been a town calendar featuring all local community events. The idea being that groups could somehow co-ordinate their efforts. Chris Buckley had made an effort in the run up to Howfenfest to promote other groups in its publicity – knowing what other groups would be doing would be useful and boost awareness locally. Doug Cunliffe added that this would also help avoid calendar clashes with other local events.

Ann Benn said that it would be beneficial for groups to come together to tackle common issues. For the Westhoughton Local History Group the issue of premises / meeting space had been an issue. Ann added that together groups could make a strong case for a community centre in Westhoughton – a town of 25,000 people.

It was generally felt that resources and access to funding would be a longer term issue.



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The £1m money Bolton Council received for the release of the covenant to allow the building of the new Sainsbury's was brought up. The question was asked what happened to this money and did Westhoughton get its fair share? A contentious issue given the difficulties faced by local groups in the current economic climate.

Brenda Shott said that the issue of premises / meeting space had also been problematic for their group, Friends of Eatock Lodge.

Lisa Bradley, Bolton At Home Community Development Officer, said that the groups would inevitably be stronger together and collaboratively they would have a more powerful 'voice' and be better equipped to face challenges. Lisa spoke of the example of The Bolton Hub, where Bolton CVS joined forces with a number of voluntary groups to acquire and fund premises.

Doug Cunliffe, HACFRA, spoke of their plans use for John Holt Youth and Community Centre to be improved and opened up for more community groups, and of the need to avoid duplication.

Lisa Bradley said that WACO, although absent, had been campaigning for some time for community premises in Westhoughton and had recently acquired the former Central Drive Youth Club. This was open for all Westhoughton community groups at reasonable rates.

Mark Taylor, Hope Church, said that the group should recognise the 'sub-communities' in Westhoughton and how these are catered for.

John Howard-Norman, Westhoughton Methodist Church, said he was interested in the bigger picture, in how in these difficult times the network could strengthen the health of the community.

Doug Cunliffe said the original network had become a useful space for communication, talking and sharing information, that groups had come together to work co-operatively rather than in competition.

Harold Daniels said the network would be a celebration of the vast ability and talent within Westhoughton. Its geographic position meaning that it was independent of Bolton and this was the essence of the town and its character.

Doug Cunliffe said that the network should recognise that all groups are run by volunteers with limited time and resources and that they would inevitably be asking 'what is in it for us?' The network should be mindful of this if it is to be sustainable.

Jean Jones, WVS, said that the network would be a great opportunity for sharing skills and volunteers and backed this up by offering the help and support of WVS volunteers.

Dave Hendry, Westhoughton Art Group, said that he had not previously known many of the groups in attendance and was impressed. He felt a sense of agreement but a need to work on the detail of the 'business' of the network.



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Mark Taylor said that a website/portal/hub with information from all groups would be great and suggested this might be something the school could support as a project for children and young people.

Ann Butler from Westhoughton High School said that she would take this back as an idea. She also said that she saw lots of potential for joint working and collaborative funding bids within the network.

Chris Buckley agreed that a website or portal is a logical step, however it would need to be thought through and managed, and tailored to the needs of the group. Not everyone is on the internet. He offered to lead/assist/mentor the website/portal/hub project. Chris also spoke of ideas for campaigns to attract additional funding to Westhoughton, and of a mini-Volunteer Centre where people looking for volunteer opportunities in Westhoughton could find them via the network where the range of opportunities and groups could be represented. Duplication with existing services should be avoided. Though having access to a local and reliable pool of volunteers could be beneficial to community groups.

Ann Benn said that the network would need structure and a mandate. She said that a community centre could be a long-term aim. Ann suggested the network might require a constitution. This would be important should there be any funding bids.

Chris Buckley said whilst there was a desire and to have a Westhoughton Community Centre - it was apparent that there were existing facilities in Westhoughton – John Holt Centre, Carnegie Hall, the 'WACO' Community Centre, Daisy Hill Community Centre, etc., therefore, it would be useful know what is on offer, availability, and how much they cost.

Neil Hart, Westhoughton Rugby Lions, said that they were keen to work with others. Their group had also been looking to acquire facilities / premises and were currently looking at this themselves. He felt that it was essential that the aims / objectives of the network are agreed and that the group have a clear purpose. Terms of reference would ensure that it does not become merely a 'talking shop'.

Lisa Bradley supported the idea of terms of reference and clear purpose. Previous networks had been dominated by council officers and support agencies rather than by community groups. Lisa asked for opinions on who would lead the meetings and how they would actually run.

Others agreed that they did not want the meetings to be 'overrun' with statutory agencies, but that the network be 'by and for local community groups'.

Jim Gilfillan said that groups ought to ask 'what is in it for us?' and that the network would need to cater for this in the long term. He supported the exclusion of Councillors (elected members) because their knowledge means they can often steal the limelight and they can often dominate in such a setting. Jim said that if the long term future for the group was to seek funding for a community centre, a structure would be required.



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Access to politicians is available through the Town Council and Area Forum. As with other agencies, contact could be made on a needs basis or by invite to deal with specific problems/issues. There would also be the possibility of inviting guests to meeting to present on specific topics that might be of interest to groups.

Doug Cunliffe asked, was there not a danger of the community network duplicating the work already being done by WACO?

Neil Hart said that the type of structure for the network needed more discussion.

Lisa Bradley suggested that not all members of the network would want the commitment of a group with a constitution, chair, secretary, treasurer. We would need people to volunteer for these roles and many are already 'pulled out' with their own groups and projects. Lisa asked would a more informal structure be of interest and would it be sustainable in the long term.

Mark Taylor said that the network should aim to take 'small steps' and suggested rather than setting objectives which might not be achievable that we set basic objectives which might lead to bigger projects over time.

Lisa Bradley asked that we try to draw out these objectives from the members and asked 'what they want from the network'.

Anne Burns said that the key objective would be improved communication and that there would be lots of 'spin-offs' from this.

Ann Benn suggested that officers and subgroups be set up to look at specific issues. Ann said that structure would be needed to achieve big things.

Doug Cunliffe said that 'small steps' were essential, starting with improved communication and better relations and that the group would evolve over time.

Dave Hendry commented that there was general consensus over the purpose but there were differences around the speed of progress. These issues would need further discussion. The first step had been made.

Harold Daniels asked that the members look at devising some objectives for the group. The following were agreed upon in the short term:

- Information sharing
- Collaboration and co-operation
- Mutual support and advice
- Building relationships

Lisa Bradley agreed to compare these with the original Community Network terms of reference for any glaring omissions and to try to come up with an overarching aim which would incorporate the 'by and for local community groups' and 'giving a voice to local groups'.



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Chris Buckley said that it would be good to audit those in attendance in terms of their groups and skills, resources that could be shared, as well as upcoming events. This could feed into the website/portal/hub project. Lisa Bradley and Chris Buckley agreed to undertake this information gathering process.

David Kaye, Wingates Band, remarked that all the groups in attendance relied on a small amount of people giving their own time and that inevitably groups would have a 'self-preservation' agenda and a limited amount to give. David felt that communication was the most important objective.

The meeting concluded with a number of action points and the feeling that it was worth persevering with the group as there appeared to be a need and a desire to have a Westhoughton-centric group supporting the voluntary and community sector. In order to maintain momentum a meeting was agreed in early September, as opposed to the expected quarterly meetings.

Peter Schofield offered to make available the Westhoughton United Reformed Church (The Bethel) for the next meeting.

## **Action Points**

1. Develop a frame of reference for the group (membership, scope, objectives).
2. Contact individual groups to gain an insight of who they are, what they do, where and how often they meet, what issues they face and what resources or skills they may have to offer to the group,
3. An audit of existing facilities in the town available to groups.
4. Continue to promote the Westhoughton Community Network and bring on board local community groups who may add to or benefit from being involved.
5. The establishment of a website.

## **4. Date and Time of Next Meeting**

Tuesday 6th September from 7:00pm

At Westhoughton United Reformed Church Hall (The Bethel), Park Road, Westhoughton

Tea and biscuits to be provided by WURC.

*Our thanks to the Rotary Club of Westhoughton for sponsoring this first meeting at Brookfield Hall, and to Bolton At Home for their administrative support.*

Further information or amendments to:  
Chris Buckley (07981 172552) or Lisa Bradley (07715 747606)

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